

## Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-07  
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15  
USIA-06 IO-13 OMB-01 TRSE-00 /073 W  
-----116993 211757Z /43

R 211510Z DEC 77  
FM AMEMBASSY ROME  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9405  
INFO AMEMBASSY BONN  
AMCONSUL FLORENCE  
AMCONSUL GENOA  
AMEMBASSY LONDON  
AMCONSUL MILAN  
AMCONSUL NAPLES  
AMCONSUL PALERMO  
AMEMBASSY PARIS  
AMCONSUL TRIESTE POUCH  
AMCONSUL TURIN POUCH  
US DOCOSOUTH  
USMISSION USNATO

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 ROME 20891

US DOCOSOUTH FOR INTAF

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: PINT, IT  
SUBJECT: THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY TODAY

SUMMARY: THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY, IN THEOR MARXIST  
THOUGH IN PRACTICE CONSERVATIVE, HAS STEADILY LOST PROFILE,  
ROLE AND SIGNIFICANCE. ALTHOUGH IT HAS REVIVED REASONABLY  
WELL AFTER A SERIES OF GRAVE BLOWS IN 1976 AND IS NOW  
IN THE HANDS OF COMPETENT LEADERS, THE PARTY SEES LITTLE  
OR NO FUTURE FOR ITSELF AS AN INDEPENDENT POLITICAL FORCE.  
END SUMMARY.

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1. THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY IS A PARTY WITH A BRIEF  
PAST AND NOT FUTURE. NEVER A SIGNIFICANT POLITICAL  
FORCE--AT ITS HEIGHT IN THE 1948 NATIONAL ELECTION IT  
RECEIVED 7 PERCENT OF THE VOTE--THE PARTY HAS BEEN VICTIM OF  
A SUCCESSION OF BLOWS IN RECENT YEARS WHICH HAVE  
DEMORALIZED THE PARTY AND FURTHER DIMINISHED ITS

INFLUENCE AND PROSPECTS. IN 1976 ITS PORTION OF THE VOTE IN THE NATIONAL ELECTION FELL TO 3 PERCENT: ITS FORMER SECRETARY MARIO TANASSI WAS IDENTIFIED AS ONE OF THE AJOR DEFENDANTS IN THE LOCKHEED SCANDAL, IT WENT THROUGH A PAINFUL LEADERSHIP DISPUTE AND SUFFERED SEVERAL DRAMATIC DEFECTIONS: AND IT WAS FORCED OUT OF A LARGE PROPORTION OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENTS IN WHICH IT HAD PARTICIPATED. ALTHOUGH THE PARTY HAS PULLED ITSELF TOGETHER REASONABLY WELL UNDER PIER LUIGI ROMITA, IT HAS, WITH ONLY FITEEN DEPUTIES AND EIGHT SENATORS, LITTLE INFLUENCE LEFT IN ITALIAN POLITICAL LIFE. NOW--AFTER HAVING SECEDED FORM THE SOCIALIST PARTY IN 1947 AND 1969--THE PARTY AGAIN CONTEMPLATES ITS OWN DEMIST THROUGH A RE-ENACTMENT OF THE 1966 MERGER WITH THE SOCIALISTS. BEHIND THIS PROPOSAL LIES THE FACT THAT THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATS FIND THEMSELVES IN A CRISIS OF IDENTITY.

2.IT MUST BE ADMITTED THAT THE PARTY HAS LITTLE IDENTIFY TO HAVE A CRISIS OVER. TWICE BORN IN SCHISM, ITS ESSENCE IS NEGATIVE. IT IS A MARXIST PARTY WHOSE WHOLE REASON FOR EXISTING LIES IN ITS DESTINCTION FROM SOCIALISTS AND ITS OPPOSITION TO COMMUNISTS. AS A CONSEQUENCE IT SUFFERS FROM AN EXTREME CASE OF THE INTELLECTUAL SPLITS. ON THE ONE HAND IT HAS ADOPTED ALL THE TRADITIONAL MARXIST PARAPHERNALIA--ITS MEMBERS

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CALL ONE ANOTHER "COMRADE" AND THE POLICY-MAKING BODY IS A "CENTRAL COMMITTEE"--AND ITS USUALLY FOLLOWS THE SOCIALIST PARTY INTO OR OUT OF COALITION GOVERNMENTS. ON THE OTHER HAND, IT IS STRONGLY COMMITTED TO NATO AND THE EUROPEAN COMMUNICTY AND ITS POLICIES AND PARLIAMENTARY BEHAVIOR ASSOCIATE IT CLOSELY WITH THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS. CONSEQUENTLY THE PARTY OCCUPIES AN AMBIGUOUS PLACE ON THE POLITICAL SPECTRUM: QIN PHILOSOPHY ON THE LEFT BUT INPRACTICE BY THE SIDE OF THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS.

3. THIS AMBIGUITY IS REFLECTED IN THEPARTY'S CONSTITUENCY. THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC VOTER IS MOST OFTEN A SKILLED WORKER OR A MIDDLE CLASS WHITE COLLAR EMPLOYEE. HE COMES OUT OF THE GENERAL SOCIALIST TRADITION AND THERFORE WILL NOT VOTE FOR THE LIBERALS: HE IS SLIGHTLY ANTI-CLERICAL AND WILL THEREFORE NOT VOTE FOR THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS: HE S CONSERVATIVE AND WILL THEREFORE NOT VOTE FOR THE SOCIALISTS: ANDHE FEARS MOSCOW SO HE WILL NOT VOTE FOR THE COMMUNISTS. GIVEN THIS TITUATION IT IS UNDER-STANDABLE WHY, UNLESS THEPARTY DEVELOPS A MORE POSTIVIE

BASIS OF ATTRACTION THAT THIS FAUTE DE MIEUX APPEAL,  
IT WILL CONTINUE TO LOSE SUPPORT TO THE RIFHT AND  
THE LEFT.

4. AGAINST THIS GENERAL BACKGROUND THE PARTY HAD  
IN THE PAST YEAR OR SO FOLLOWED TWO PARALLEL STRATEGIES.  
ONE APPROACH WAS AIMED AT FORGING AN ALLIANCE WITH  
THE OTHER LAY PARTIES IN ORDER TO CONSTRUCT A THIRD  
FORCE BETWEEN THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS AND THE COMMU-  
NISTS. THE OBJECTIVE OF THIS FORMATION WAS TO SLOW  
DOWN THE POLARIZATION IN TALIAN POLITICS, MAXIMIZE  
THE INFLUENCE OF THE SMALLER PARTIES AND KEEP THE  
COMMUNISTS ISOLATED. PARTY LEADERS HAD NO FLASE EXPECTA-  
TIONS OF BRINGING ABOUT SUCH AN ALLIANCE QUICKLY BUT,  
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AS VICE SECRETARY PEITRO LONGO RECENTLY SAID  
TO AN EMBASSY OFFICER, "WE WILL HOLD TO OUR POSITION  
AND LEAVE IT TO THE OTHER PARTIES TO EXPLAIN TO THE  
VOTERS WHY THEY HAVE REFUSED TO COOPERATE IN AN  
EFFORT TO CREATE A DEMOCRATIC ALTERNATIVE TO THE  
CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS".

5. THE OTHER APPROACH WAS TO WORK FOR THE ESTAB-  
LISHMENT OF A "SOCIALIST AREA"--THAT IS, ALLIANCE  
BUT NOT FUSION BETWEEN THE SOCIALIST AND SOCIAL  
DEMOCRATIC PARTIES. SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC LEADERS

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 ROME 20891

HYPOTHESIZED THAT THE TWO WOULD ATTRACT MORE VOTES IF THEY WERE TOGETHER THAN IF THEY WERE SEPARATE AND THEREFORE IN COMPETITION. THEY MAINTAIN THAT A SOCIALIST BLOC WOULD RECEIVE 20 PERCENT OF THE VOTE AND WOULD AS A RESULT CONSTITUTE A SIGNIFICANT FORCE IN ITALIAN POLITICS.

6. A FEW WEEKS AGO THE PARTY OPENLY ESPOUSED ANOTHER STRATEGY--OUTRIGHT UNION WITH THE SOCIALISTS. THE DECISION WAS TAKEN AT THE NOVEMBER SESSION OF THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE, FOLLOWING SARAGAT'S CALL FOR A REUNIFICATION OF THE TWO PARTIES. "AT THE MOMENT WHEN ITALY AGAIN HAS A SINGLE SOCIALIST PARTY WITH CONFIDENTIAL

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20 PERCENT OF THE VOTE, "THE PARTY PRESIDENT SAID," THIS PARTY WILL BE A DETERMINING RATHER THAN A SUBORDINATE ELEMENT IN ITALIAN POLITICS". SARAGAT'S APPEAL WAS ADOPTED UNANIMOUSLY BY THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE AND THE FINAL COMMUNIQUE LABELED UNIFICATION AS THE PARTY'S GOAL.

7. THE SOCIALISTS HAVE SHOWN NO PUBLIC INTEREST IN THE PROPOSAL. WHEN AN EMBASSY OFFICER ASKED SENATOR AJELLO FOR HIS REACTION TO SARAGAT'S APPEAL, AJELLO REPLIED WITH A DISDAINFUL GESTURE AND A COMMENT THAT THE PROPOSAL "WOULD NOT SOLVE ANYTHING". NOTHING COULD HAVE BEEN MORE CRISP THAN MANCA'S STATEMENT TO THE PRESS: IT IS NOT WORTH A REPLY". MANCINI'S RESPONSE WAS PERHAPS MOST BRUTAL OF ALL: IF THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATS WANT REUNIFICATION, THEY HAVE ONLY TO CLOSE DOWN THEIR ORGANIZATION AND JOIN THE SOCIALIST PARTY IN MASS. THE PRESS ITSELF POINTED OUT THE CARDINAL FALLACY OF SARAGAT'S ARGUMENT: IN THE NATIONAL ELECTION OF 1968 WHEN THE PARTIES WERE UNITED, THEY TOGETHER RECEIVED A MERE 14 PERCENT OF THE VOTE. NO ONE SEES ANY REASON TO THINK

THEY WOULD DO BETTER IN COMBINATION IN THE FUTURE.  
IT IS, HOWEVER, ONLY FAIR TO ADD THAT IN THE 1976  
NATIONAL ELECTION THE TWO SEPARATELY GAINED A TOTAL OF ONLY  
12 PERCENT

8. ALL THIS CASTING ABOUT BY THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATS  
TO FIND THEIR ROLE IN THE FAST-CHANGING POLITICAL  
SCENE COMES BACK TO THE PARTY'S CENTRAL PROBLEM--  
THE QUESTION OF ITS IDENTITY. THE PARTY'S REASON  
FOR EXISTENCE IS OPPOSITION TO THE COMMUNISTS. IT  
TWICE SPLIT WITH THE SOCIALIST PARTY OVER THIS  
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ISSUE, WHEN THE SOCIALISTS FAVORED BRING THE  
COMMUNISTS INTO THE GOVERNMENT . YET TODAY SOCIAL  
DEMOCRATIC LEADERS ARE OF THE OPINION THAT THE  
COMMUNIST PARTY HAS CHANGED IN MANY FUNDAMENTAL WAYS.  
WHILE THEY RETAIN CERTAIN DOUBTS--CHIEFLY OVER  
THE PARTY'S LACK OF DEMOCRATIC ORGANIZATION AND ITS  
ALIGNMENT WITH SOVIET POSITIONS ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS  
ISSUES--THEY BELIEVE THE PRESENT COMMUNIST LEADERSHIP  
IS "CAPABLE OF DIGESTING POWER IN A DEMOCRATIC WAY,"  
AS VICE SECRETARY LONGO PUT IT RECENTLY TO AN EMBASSY  
OFFICER. THE FINAL COMMUNIQUE OF THE MOST RECENT  
SESSION OF THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE (ON NOVEMBER 14)  
STATED: "THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE OF THE PSDI WELCOMES  
THE ESTABLISHMENT OF COMMUNIST CORRESPONSIBILITY IN  
THE PROGRAM ACCORD MADE POSSIBLE BY THE PROCESS OF  
REVISION UNDERWAY IN THE COMMUNIST MOVEMENT IN  
ITALY AND WEST. HOWEVER, SINCE THIS PROCESS  
IS INCOMPLETE, IT REGARDS THE INCLUSION OF COMMUNISTS  
IN THE GOVERNMENT AS NOT POSSIBLE FOR THE MOMENT".

9. THE BASIC POINT IS THAT AS THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC  
PARTY SEES ITALIAN COMMUNISM CHANGE, IT SEES ITS OWN  
REASON FOR EXISTENCE DIMINISH PARI PASSU. SIMPLY  
STATED, IT IS IN GRAVE DANGER OF BECOMING AS A PARTY  
WITHOUT A CAUSE.

10. THERE IS ALSO A PRACTICAL CONCERN WHICH SOCIAL  
DEMOCRATS SHARE WITH SEVERAL OF THE OTHER SMALL  
PARTIES. THE PARTY HAS FINANCIAL PROBLEMS. THE  
RANK AND FILE ARE DISCOURAGED AT THE PARTY'S ELECTORAL  
PROSPECTS. PERHAPS MOST OF ALL THEY ARE FRIGHTENED  
THAT COMMUNIST PARTICIPATION IN THE GOVERNMENT IS  
ONLY A MATTER OF TIME AND THAT THE SMALL  
PARTIES CAN FIND A ROLE ONLY IF THEY STAND TOGETHER.  
IT IS FOR THESE REASONS THAT THE PARTY LEADERS SEE NO FUTURE  
FOR THEIR PARTY ALONE BUT ONLY AS PART OF A LARGER  
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SOCIALIST ENTITY, A PROSPECT THAT IS INCREASINGLY  
DISTANT.GARDNER

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## Message Attributes

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